



**A BEST BEGINNINGS MINI GRANT MAY BE FOR YOU!!!!**

The Early Childhood Services Bureau is now offering “BEST BEGINNINGS MINI GRANTS”. THEY’RE QUICK. THEY’RE EASY and you can apply at any time during the year!

What is a mini grant?

\*A mini grant is for child care providers who are participating on the Early Care and Education Practitioners Registry and need funds to:

- \*replace or acquire equipment
- \*purchase developmentally appropriate toys or supplies
- \*obtain liability insurance (only for new providers \$250 maximum)
- \*meet regulatory requirements, e.g. install egress windows, or
- \*hire substitute care, to enable provider/or staff to attend training, conferences, etc.

\*The Best Beginnings mini grant is a ONE-TIME reimbursement. After you have been approved for a mini grant you make your proposed purchases and submit all receipts to ECSB for reimbursement. Purchases and receipts must be dated after the award has been made.

What do I have to do to qualify?

\*To qualify for this grant you must be a licensed or registered child care facility and be participating in the Early Childhood Career Development Practitioner Registry. There is a \$25 fee to participate in the registry. Please call 1-800-213-6310 for more information about the Practitioner Registry. Family Child Care and Group Childcare can apply for up to \$1,000.00 and a Center can apply for up to \$1,500.00.

When I can apply?

\*Applications for mini grants are accepted in the Early Childhood Services Bureau Office any time during the year. Approximately 25 grants will be awarded every three months. Only one grant per provider will be awarded during the Federal Fiscal year.

**DEADLINES**

1<sup>st</sup> quarter-October 1-December 31/All mini grant applications for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter consideration must be into ECSB no later than 5 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of September.

2<sup>nd</sup> quarter-January 1-March 31/All mini grant applications for 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter consideration must be into ECSB no later than 5 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of December.

3<sup>rd</sup> quarter-April 1-June 30/All mini grant applications for 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter consideration must be into ECSB no later than 5 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of March.

4<sup>th</sup> quarter-July 1-September 30 All mini grants application for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter consideration must be into ECSB no later than 5 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of June.

You will be notified of acceptance or denial within 30 days of the closing date of the quarter you are applying for. Remember page 1 & 2 of the application must be completed. You must at the time you submit your mini grant application also include a copy of your Practitioner Registry Certificate. Be sure to sign and date your application. Any additional information that you can supply is always helpful i.e. if you are requesting improvements due to licensing regulations it is helpful to include a letter or copy of your deficiency notice from QAD.

Send all completed applications to:

DPHHS-ECSB  
Attn: Best Beginnings Mini Grants  
PO Box 202925  
Helena MT 59620-2925

How do I apply?

\*Copies of the mini grant applications are available from:

- Download from [www.childcare.mt.gov](http://www.childcare.mt.gov).
- Resource & Referral office in your area.
- Early Childhood Services Bureau, PO Box 202925, Helena MT 59620-2925.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Mini-grant Applications

- A. *May I request funding for early childhood curriculum materials?*
- B. *How can I know if early childhood curriculum materials are developmentally appropriate?*
- C. *Where can I find guidelines/resources for selecting toys, materials, and outdoor equipment for young children?*
- D. *What kinds of toys/materials are best for young children?*
- E. *Can I request funding for computers and computer software?*

**A. *May I request funding for early childhood curriculum materials?***

Yes, as long as the materials are developmentally appropriate.

**B. *How can I know if early childhood curriculum materials are developmentally appropriate?***

An early childhood curriculum that is developmentally appropriate will help you use important kinds of information and knowledge about the children in your program as the foundation for learning activities and day-to-day practice. These three important kinds of information and knowledge include:

- Knowledge about child development and children's learning
- Knowledge of individual children
- Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which the children in your program live

**Developmentally appropriate curriculum is constructed with attention to the following guidelines:**

- Curriculum is socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to the children.
- All areas of children's development are taken into account.
- Curriculum builds upon what children already know and are able to do.
- Curriculum content is frequently built into all subject matter to help children make meaningful connections.
- Children directly and actively participate in learning activities by conducting scientific experiments, solving mathematical problems, collecting and analyzing data, collecting oral history, and performing other roles of experts in different subject matter.
- Curriculum provides opportunities to support the children's home culture and language while developing abilities to participate in the shared culture of the program and the community.

**Examples of inappropriate curriculum**

- School-age expectations of mastery of basic skills are pushed down to preschool.
- Whole-group and teacher-led instruction is the prominent teaching strategy.
- Children are expected to complete workbook pages and paper-and-pencil seatwork.
- Instruction focuses on isolated skill development, such as teaching a letter of the alphabet each week.
- Teachers follow a prescribed curriculum plan without attention to individual children's interests, needs, and context, such as regardless of where the program is located or the local weather conditions, children study snow in January.
- All children are expected most of the time to work in large groups on the same activity, to stay in their seats, to use quiet voices, and ask to use materials.
- The program provides few or no opportunities for children's choices.
- Children with disabilities or special learning needs are assigned to a class, but most of their instruction occurs with special teachers elsewhere, or while in a classroom, children with special needs are isolated in a designated area.

**C. *Where can I find guidelines/resources for selecting toys, materials, and outdoor equipment for young children?***

At <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/325.pdf> you will find the *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*, which discusses playground equipment, arrangement, and safety issues. The following resources supply child care materials and supplies:

- Bright Beginnings                      800-446-3713                      [www.classroomdirect.com/bright](http://www.classroomdirect.com/bright)

• Community Playthings	800-777-4244	<a href="http://www.communityplaythings.com">www.communityplaythings.com</a>
• Constructive Playthings	800-448-4115	<a href="http://www.cptoy.com">www.cptoy.com</a>
• Discount School Supply	800-672-2829	<a href="http://www.DiscountSchoolSupply.com">www.DiscountSchoolSupply.com</a>
• Kaplan	800-334-2014	<a href="http://www.kaplanco.com">www.kaplanco.com</a>
• Learning Materials	800-693-7164	<a href="http://www.learningmaterialswork.com">www.learningmaterialswork.com</a>
• Little People's School Supply	800-874-3325	<a href="http://www.everythingearlychildhood.com">www.everythingearlychildhood.com</a>
• NAEYC	800-424-2460	<a href="http://www.naeyc.org">www.naeyc.org</a>
• Play with a Purpose	888-330-1826	
• Redleaf Press	800-423-8309	<a href="http://www.redleafpress.org">www.redleafpress.org</a>

**D. *What kinds of toys/materials are best for young children?***

Through toys, children learn about their world, themselves, and others. Choosing toys that appeal to young children and foster their learning will make their early years count. Good toys are not necessarily expensive, and children do not need lots of them. The more a child can do with a toy, the more likely it is to be educational.

Some toys are better choices for children than others. Questions to consider when selecting toys and materials for young children are: How old are the children? What interests do they have? What do they like to do? Is it safe? (Toys that are safe for one age may be unsafe for a younger age.) Does it capture the child's interest? Is it attractive? Can the toys be used in a variety of ways? Is the toy appropriate for their age and abilities? Can the child use it alone or is another person needed? (Children need to have both kinds of toys.) What kind of activities will the toy encourage? (Books or puzzle activities will settle children down more readily than ball games.)

***Appropriate Toys and Materials for Infants***

Infants are interested in looking at toys, touching them with their hands and mouth, fitting pieces of things together and making sense of their world. Choose toys for them to look at, feel, chew on, hold, and drop. Infants enjoy the following:

- Bright-colored toys of many different textures that are washable, non-breakable, and have no sharp edges that might cut or scratch.
- Toys large enough that they cannot be swallowed with no small attached pieces (like eyes on a stuffed animal or bells on a shaker) that could be pulled off and swallowed.
- Toys that can be looked at, touched, grasped, and put into mouths
- Crawling and walking infants enjoy push-pull toys, balls, rattles, squeak toys, blocks, crib mobiles, stacking toys and rings, stuffed animals or dolls, nested boxes or cups, books with rhymes, simple picture books, noise-making toys, small soft toys for throwing, strings of beads, and music-making toys.

***Appropriate Toys and Materials for Toddlers***

Appropriate toys support the toddler's interest in climbing, running, jumping, and doing things with their hands. Toys for this age group should be simple and require little coordination. Toddlers are very interested in playing with others and imitating grown-up activities. They are also interested in exploring roles of all kinds in order to learn about their world. Therefore, boys will sometimes show interest in dolls or want to be the "mommy." Girls may want trucks or to pretend to be "Superman."

Toddlers enjoy the following:

- |                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • push-pull toys                | • books with simple stories           |
| • pedal toys                    | • blocks of assorted sizes and shapes |
| • truck/cars big enough to ride | • peg boards and puzzles              |
| • wagons                        | • water play toys                     |
| • balls and bean bags           | • simple dress-up clothes             |
| • climbing structures           | • dolls and stuffed animals           |

### ***Appropriate Toys and Materials for Preschool Children***

Appropriate toys and materials support young children's interests in pretend play, and physical development. Preschool-age children also are interested in active physical play and are increasingly curious about the world around them. Preschool children may play with many of the same toys as toddlers but in different ways. Preschool children enjoy the following:

- puppets
- farm and community play sets
- transportation vehicles of all types
- simple construction toys
- books, instruments and music
- wheel toys and sleds
- climbing structures
- blocks of assorted sizes and shapes
- water, dirt, and sand play toys
- puzzles and simple board games
- balls of assorted sizes
- cognitive games and manipulative toys
- dress-up clothes and dramatic play props
- dolls and stuffed animals

### ***Appropriate Toys and Materials for Early School-Age Children***

Appropriate toys and materials support early school-age children's interests in collections or hobbies, interactions with friends, reading and writing skills, muscle control, active play, and learning about the "real world." Early school-age children enjoy the following:

- board Games
- dominoes, jacks, and marbles
- electric trains (UL approved)
- construction sets
- science kits
- craft kits
- larger bicycles
- prop boxes and costumes
- puppets
- fashion and career dolls
- doll house and furniture
- jump ropes
- work bench with real tools
- roller and ice skates
- book, instruments and music
- balls and hoops

#### **E. *Can I request funding for computers and computer software?***

Yes, as long as you describe how the equipment or software will be used in your program for children's development and learning and/or to support program development. Computers may also be used in the day-to-day management of the child care program. This includes activities such as tracking attendance, parent sign-in and out, participating in on-line billing for the Best Beginnings Scholarship program and managing Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements.

**Send all applications to:**

**DPHHS-ECSB  
Attn: Best Beginnings Mini Grants  
PO Box 202925  
Helena, MT 59620-2925**

## Application for Best Beginnings Mini Grants

NAME: _____ PS#: _____				
PHYSICAL ADDRESS: _____		CITY: _____	ZIP: _____	
MAILING ADDRESS: _____		CITY: _____	ZIP: _____	
(if different from physical address)				
E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____		PHONE NUMBER: _____		
FACILITY NAME: _____		FACILITY TYPE: _____	PV#: _____	
SOCIAL SECURITY # OR EIN #: _____				
Have you received a provider grant and / or a mini grant in the past? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO				
If Yes, list each year: _____				
Are you participating in the Best Beginnings Provider Grants Program? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Are you serving state paid children? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If Yes, how many? _____				
<b>IN ORDER TO APPLY FOR THIS GRANT YOU MUST BE A REGISTERED MEMBER OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER REGISTRY. (TO RECEIVE AN APPLICATION PACKET CALL 1-800-213-6310. THERE IS A \$25 APPLICATION FEE TO PARTICIPATE ON THE PRACTITIONER REGISTRY.)</b>				
<b>A COPY OF YOUR PRACTITIONER REGISTRY CERTIFICATE MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS APPLICATION.</b>				
This grant may be used for replacing or acquiring equipment, developmentally appropriate toys, supplies, liability insurance (new providers \$250.00 Maximum), egress window, substitute care, etc. (Please refer to the attached tip sheet.)				
<b><u>THE BEST BEGINNINGS MINI-GRANT IS A ONE-TIME REIMBURSEMENT.</u></b>				
Please complete the following table, providing information about the items that you plan to purchase using grant funds:				
DESCRIPTION	# OF ITEMS	VENDOR	COST/ITEM	TOTAL
TOTAL:				

1. An overview of your proposed project, including the need for your project.
2. An explanation of how the project enhances the provider's ability to meet the needs of young children as identified in the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base and how your requests are developmentally appropriate for the ages of the children you serve.
3. A description of the Knowledge Base Content area or areas the project will address. The Knowledge Base Content areas are Health, Safety and Nutrition; Child Growth and Development; Environmental Design; Child Guidance; Family and Community Partnerships; Program Management; Curriculum; Observation and Assessment; and Professionalism.
4. Please explain any other relevant information about your project and facility that would help to evaluate your proposal. I.e. attaché bids, letter from QAD, pictures, etc.

I agree that this application is for a **one-time payment**, and that proposed purchases and activities for this grant application will take place during the 12 months **AFTER** the grant is awarded.

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

REASON:

ECSB SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_